

# Best practices for great companies

Take advantage of what these groups offer to make your company top-of-mind with customers.







Photo credit: Kelly Faloon/Plumbing & Mechanical

Networking with peers is a big benefit of membership in an association, best practices group or franchise. You can learn from their mistakes as well as mentor younger members entering the group.

Running a small business isn't easy, no matter what industry you're in. The plumbing, heating and cooling contracting industry has its giants, but many companies are small- to mid-sized businesses working in their local communities. Like many of their small-business brethren, PHC contracting businesses are frequently seeking out the most useful information to connect with customers and potential customers in their area while keeping their businesses profitable.

Keeping track of all the business data required for

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	About the group	Number of operations or members	Restrictions	Costs/fees	Contact
PHCP FRANCHISES	 Aire Serv A subsidiary of The Dwyer Group, Aire Serv provides installation, maintenance and repair of HVAC and indoor air quality systems.	152 locations in the United States; all are locally owned and operated.	Yes. Restricted to specific territories.	Initial investment ranges from \$85,100 to \$216,400, depending on size of territory and population. There are ongoing fees.	800/583-2662, AireServFranchise@dwyergroup.com, or visit www.airesevrfranchise.com.
	 American Leak Detection Provides nondestructive detection of concealed water, sewer and other leaks.	139 locations worldwide; 125 locations in the United States and 9 locations in three countries. Five locations are corporate-owned.	Yes. Every territory is defined and protected.	Initial franchise fee is between \$29,500 and \$120,000. The overall investment ranges from \$76,755 to \$259,550. Royalties are paid on monthly adjusted gross sales.	Judy Howard, director of franchise operations, 800/755-6697, jhoward@americanleakdetection.com, or visit www.americanleakdetectionfranchise.com.
	 Benjamin Franklin Plumbing Clockwork Home Services' nationally branded franchise in the plumbing market.	As of March 2014, there are 253 franchises, across the United States. Of these, 11 are company-owned.	Yes. Exclusivity in a defined territory.	There is an initial investment, which varies according to the population of the territory, and ongoing fees based on sales volume.	John Henkels, 866/574-7431, or visit www.benfranklinfranchise.com.
	 Bluefrog Plumbing + Drain BlueFrog Plumbing + Drain launched in late February 2014 as part of Home Brands Group, the parent franchisor to Re-Bath and 5 Day Kitchens.	More than 17 locations.	A franchisee licenses a designated territory in which no other license is granted during the term of the agreement.	The typical cost ranges from \$1,500 to \$80,000. Discounts are provided to business owners in the plumbing industry; veterans are provided with a 50% discount.	Call 855/321-7822 or email info@bluefrogplumbing.com.





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PHCC FRANCHISES	 Linc Service Network	Provides energy solutions to commercial building owners worldwide.	161; 26 are company-owned.	Yes. Franchise rights are to a specific territory.	Franchise fee is \$75,000. Royalty fees are charged by a schedule based on service revenue. Some additional fees for training and recruiting are charged.	Dave Cernich, senior vice president of sales, 412/394-7413, Dave.Cernich@abm.com, or visit www.lincservice.com.
	 Mr. Rooter	The Dwyer Group's plumbing installation and repair franchise.	212 franchises.	Yes. Based on population.	Total investment ranges from \$80,125 to \$188,800, plus any additional franchise fees or real estate costs.	Call 800/298-6855, email MrRooterFranchise@dwyer-group.com or visit www.mrrooterfranchise.com.
	 Mr. Waterheater	An emergency-response specialty plumbing business that can be added to a full-service plumbing or HVAC company.	N/A	Yes. Protected territories are 50,000 to 100,000 households.	Initial franchise fee is \$9,900. Total investment ranges from \$54,325 to \$150,995.	Call 866/MISTERW or visit www.mrwaterheater.com/franchise.
	 One Hour Heating & Air Conditioning	Clockwork Home Services' nationally branded franchise in the HVAC market.	As of March 2014, there are 262 franchises across the United States and five in Canada. Of these, 47 are company-owned.	Yes. Exclusivity in a defined territory.	There is an initial investment, which varies according to the population of the territory, and ongoing fees based on sales volume.	John Henkels, 866/574-7431, or visit www.onehourfranchise.com.
	 Rooter-Man	For contractors and business owners looking for an opportunity in the sewer- and drain-cleaning business.	More than 480 locations.	Yes. Select territories are available.	Franchise license fee is based on population; the minimum is \$3,975. Monthly fee is a minimum of \$65, and ad fee is \$10 minimum.	Call 888/628-1908 or visit www.rootermanfranchise.com.
	 Roto-Rooter	The Roto-Rooter U.S. franchise system is full (international opportunities are still available) but Roto-Rooter continues to partner with independent contractors in various markets.	44 company-owned branches, 500 independently owned franchises and 68 independent contractors.	Yes. Independent contractor territories are owned by Roto-Rooter and serve markets with population sizes of 200,000 to more than 1 million people.	Through a licensing agreement, Roto-Rooter contracts with an individual to run a Roto-Rooter business within a select territory.	Call 800/780-3292, email contractorrecruiting@rrsc.com or visit www.rotorooter.com.
PHCC BEST PRACTICES GROUPS	 AirTime 500	Success Group International's affinity group for independent HVAC contractors, providing them with management direction, buying power and training.	Approaching 400 members.	Yes, to ensure contractors have a competitive edge in their markets.	An initial membership investment gives members access to the Instafix system and franchise-level tools. A minimal membership fee provides access to a team of industry experts for consultation.	Call 866/370-9187 or visit www.HVACServicesNow.com.
	 Construction Contractors' Alliance	An enhanced service group of PHCC that provides contractors with a means to find solutions to the specific issues new construction contractors face.	Averages 25 members.	No territorial restrictions, but prospective members must belong to PHCC.	Dues are \$3,750 per year.	Charlotte Perham, 800/533-7694, perham@naphcc.org, or visit www.phccweb.org.
	 Mechanical Service Contractors of America	A subsidiary of MCAA, MSCA provides education, marketing and labor/management services to its union mechanical service contractor members.	More than 1,400 members.	No territorial restrictions, but must be union mechanical service contractors.	Dues are .07 cents per manhour, with a minimum of \$840 and a maximum of \$17,500. Members of MCAA and MSCA make only one minimum dues payment.	Jan Grillo, 301/869-5800, jgrillo@mcaa.org, or visit www.mcaa.org.
	 Nexstar Network	A business networking organization for the plumbing, HVAC and electrical home services industries.	450 member companies across the continent.	Yes. Membership is allocated by market areas.	There are several levels of membership, each having a range of dues and fees appropriate to individual needs.	Lisa Schardt or David Janssen, 888/240-STAR, membership@nexstarnetwork.com, or visit www.nexstarnetwork.com.

PHCP BEST PRACTICES GROUPS

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PHCP BEST PRACTICES GROUPS	 Plumbers' Success International	Success Group International's affinity group for independent plumbing contractors, providing them with management direction, buying power and training.	Approaching 300 members.	Yes, to ensure contractors have a competitive edge in their markets.	An initial membership investment gives members access to the Profit Success System and franchise-level tools. A minimal membership fee provides access to a team of industry experts for consultation.	Call 866/370-9187 or visit <a href="http://www.PlumbersSuccess.com">www.PlumbersSuccess.com</a> .
	 Plumbing Contractors of America	A subsidiary of MCAA, PCA provides education, marketing and labor/management services to its union-affiliated plumbing members.	MCAA members are automatically a member of PCA without separate dues.	Yes. Must be union-affiliated plumbing contractors.	Part of MCAA's dues; based on manhours.	Sean McGuire, LEED AP, director of industry programs, <a href="mailto:smcguire@mcaa.org">smcguire@mcaa.org</a> , or visit <a href="http://www.mcaa.org/pca">www.mcaa.org/pca</a> .
	 Quality Service Contractors	An enhanced service group of PHCC that provides plumbing and HVAC service contractors tools and networking to improve their businesses.	200 members.	No territorial restrictions, but QSC members also must belong to PHCC.	The 2014 QSC investment is \$3,988 for 12 months.	Charlie Wallace, vice president/COO, 800/533-7694, or visit <a href="http://www.qsc-phcc.org">www.qsc-phcc.org</a> .
	 Radiant & Hydronics Council	Provides specific services to radiant and hydronics members of ACCA to help compete in the modern business climate.	More than 500.	None.	Included with ACCA dues, which vary depending on location and number of employees.	Email <a href="mailto:radiant@acca.org">radiant@acca.org</a> , call 703/824-8854 or visit <a href="http://www.acca.org/rhc">www.acca.org/rhc</a> .
	 Service Nation Alliance	Service Nation Alliance was created to help determined, independent owners of service businesses grow their profits faster.	Growth has expanded 75% in last year.	Membership is restricted to one per 800,000 Metropolitan Statistical Area and a limited geographic radius.	Many members earn more than the cost with the platinum rebate program.	Call John Kazor at 877/262-3341 or visit <a href="http://www.ServiceNationAlliance.com">www.ServiceNationAlliance.com</a> .
	 Service Roundtable	Provides business owners real-world experience, professional marketing and business tools, and quarterly cash rebates.	More than 3,500 people over several continents.	No. Any plumbing, HVAC, solar or electrical contracting company can join.	\$50 per month for one industry channel; \$75 per month for any two industry channels together.	Email <a href="mailto:Success@ServiceRoundtable.com">Success@ServiceRoundtable.com</a> , call 877/262-3341 or visit <a href="http://www.ServiceRoundtable.com">www.ServiceRoundtable.com</a> .
	 The Unified Group	Offers independent commercial and industrial HVAC contractors industry-specific training and other business tools.	More than 50 members.	Yes. Territories are geographically exclusive.	N/A	Allison Rodgers, 888/714-5990, <a href="mailto:rogersa@theunifiedgroup.com">rogersa@theunifiedgroup.com</a> , or visit <a href="http://www.theunifiedgroup.com">www.theunifiedgroup.com</a> .
PHCP ASSOCIATIONS	 Union-Affiliated Contractors	An enhanced service group of PHCC that addresses the specific needs of signatory contractors within PHCC.	294 members.	No territorial restrictions, but members must employ union plumbers and pipefitters, and belong to PHCC.	\$377 per year.	Rodney Jones, executive director, 888/997-0535, <a href="mailto:jones@naphcc.org">jones@naphcc.org</a> , or visit <a href="http://www.phccweb.org">www.phccweb.org</a> .
	 Air Conditioning Contractors of America	ACCA serves professionals in the HVACR community, working together to promote professional contracting, energy efficiency, and healthy, comfortable indoor environments.	4,000 members.	None.	Varies depending on location and number of employees.	Email <a href="mailto:member@acca.org">member@acca.org</a> , call 703/824-8854 or visit <a href="http://www.acca.org">www.acca.org</a> .
	 American Fire Sprinkler Association	AFSA provides open shop fire sprinkler contractors with training, consulting, communication, representation and many more services.	Nearly 1,000 contractors, manufacturers, suppliers and vendors.	None.	Rates for new members: Annual sales less than \$10,000,000, dues are \$400. Annual sales greater than \$10,000,000, dues are \$1,000.	Jeff Livaudais, director of membership and chapter relations, 214/395-5965, ext. 133, <a href="mailto:jlivaudais@firesprinkler.org">jlivaudais@firesprinkler.org</a> .

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PHCP ASSOCIATIONS	 Mechanical Contractors Association of America	MCAA provides industry education to union mechanical construction contractors (mechanical service and construction, plumbing and pipe welding).	2,800 members.	General membership is restricted to union mechanical construction, service, plumbing and pipe welding contractors.	Dues are .07 cents per manhour, with a minimum of \$840 and a maximum of \$17,500. These dues include membership in the PCA. Members who belong to both MCAA and MSCA make only one minimum dues payment, which applies to both organizations.	Jan Grillo, 301/869-5800, jgrillo@mcaa.org, or visit www.mcaa.org.
	 National Association of Oil and Energy Service Professionals	OESP educates and trains oil and energy service managers on energy and home comfort issues.	1,200 members.	None.	\$100 for national dues. Chapter dues varies between chapters — anywhere from \$10 to \$60. Corporate membership is \$545.	Judy Garber at 888/552-0900 or George Fantacone at Santoro Oil, gfantacone@santoroil.com.
	 Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors-National Association	PHCC provides promotion, advancement, education and training to plumbing, heating and cooling contractors.	More than 3,500 contractor members and 70,000 technicians.	None.	The annual national membership dues amount is \$495. Special introductory membership fees are currently available. State and local dues of varying amounts also may be required in a member's area.	Call 800/533-7694, email naphcc@naphcc.org or visit www.phccweb.org.
	 Radiant Professionals Alliance	A group of radiant and hydronic manufacturers, distributors, contractors, designers and dealers.	About 500 members.	None.	Manufacturer: Category 1 - \$1,500, Category 2 - \$3,000, Category 3 - \$4,500; Distributor - \$300; Dealer or contractor - \$300; Associate - \$300; Design professional - \$300; Individual - \$50; Organization - \$50; and IAPMO Associate - \$50.	To reach Membership Director Alan Wald, call 909/472-4211, email alan.wald@iapmo.org, or visit www.radiantprofessionalsalliance.org.

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licenses, health-care and liability insurance, taxes, state and federal regulations, building codes, permits, pricing, payroll and accounts receivable is a monumental task. Add in marketing campaigns, technician sales and installation training, customer service rep training, product and technology updates, and employee recruiting — you can see why some companies really struggled to keep their doors open during the Great Recession.

Independence has its advantages, but sometimes you just need some help.

The groups listed range from national associations to best practices groups to franchise companies. You can find help with legislative and code issues, marketing your company to the right customers, honing leadership skills to inspire employees, training service technicians how to interact effectively

with customers, learning about the newest industry technology or selling your business.

**Independence has its advantages, but sometimes you just need some help.**

But probably the most beneficial element of belonging to an association, best practices group or franchise is networking. Talking with your peers about similar issues can give you insight on how to resolve a situation at your company or add a new business to your services. You can learn from the mistakes of others as

well as mentor younger members entering the group.

You also can be an advocate for your industry through programs designed to promote the professionalism of the industry, the career potential for young people, and the job satisfaction of providing clean water and making buildings comfortable in local communities.

Whatever your situation, partnering with one or two of these groups can provide education and training on a variety of business topics to keep you focused on making your business profitable. But these groups are not one size fits all, so do your homework. Some groups allow prospective members to attend a meeting or convention for a small fee or no charge at all.

Take advantage of these opportunities to find the best fit for your business philosophy.

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**For more detailed information on these franchises, best practices groups and associations, go to [www.PMmag.com](http://www.PMmag.com).**